**Minutes of Uppingham Town Council Full Council meeting,**

**held at Uppingham Town Hall on Wednesday 9th August 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Present, Cllrs Liz Clarke, David Ainslie, Trevor Colbourne, Pat Dalby, Sam Findlay, Mike Fish, Barry Hobbs, Tom Johnson, Godfrey Jennings, Peter Rees, Mark Shaw, Ron Simpson, Ray Sutton.

The Town Clerk Sharon Coe, Cynthia Ondeng Administration Assistant.

14 members of the public and RC Cllr Christine Wise

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It was proposed by Cllr Rees and seconded by Cllr Shaw that the apologies from Cllrs Edwards and Cooper were accepted. **Resolved unanimously.**  **Declarations of members’ interests and applications for dispensations**  Cllr Shaw – dispensation for council term – Uppingham First, Uppingham Homes CLT and Beeches Resident Association.  Non-pecuniary interests were declared by Cllr Johnson item 7a. (late night shopping) Councillor Ainslie item 7b ( Limes, Firs and Spurs) Councillor Hobbs item 7c, 11b and item 18 ( Uppingham Bowls Club)Councillor Simpson item 7a 16 and 17F.  **An opportunity for the public to speak, in accordance with Standing Orders 2.3.4 – 2.3.9**  RCClr Wise reported that the Fix My Street application was currently not working. She suggested that, if UTC agreed, that enquiries regarding the green spaces (cutting and maintenance) could be collated under the Amenities Committee remit and forwarded to RCC for action.  UIB – Results would be in next month from the judging that had recently taken place. The committee had decided that the 2024 competition would not be entered due to rebranding and celebrating the outstanding work done over the years. The committee was looking for a new Chairperson and committee members so please get involved. Two major difficulties on the judging morning were dog poo and Biffa not clearing certain areas.  Mrs Thomas "I am relieved to see item 16 on the agenda, so that Council will at last address residents' concerns about how the private companies Uppingham 1st and Vanguard relate to the Council. The points I make concern councillor behaviour and transparency IN REGARD TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, not the business of these two companies. We also welcome our representations being recorded.  A growing number of us are concerned that the Council is being damaged by the lack of transparency, even secrecy surrounding a small group of councillors who appear to have met with landowners and developers WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS. We now know that Vanguard has hosted the meetings. The councillors concerned are Board Members and Directors of Uppingham 1st and Vanguard, as well as members of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee - the committee charged with doing the preparitory work for the Draft Refreshed Plan.They appear to use information gained at these meetings to inform the work of the NPAC. SO WHY ARE THEY MEETING THESE PEOPLE WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF FULL COUNCIL, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN QUALIFYING BODY? I'm afraid Commercial Sensitivity wouldn't excuse this.  The lines of communication in developing the Neighbourhood Plan are opaque, but it seems the preferred stopping place has been NPAC, A COMMITTEE WITHOUT DELEGATED POWERS. Somewhat illogically, communication with FULL COUNCIL, to which NPAC is responsible, has been kept to a minimum.  However... over the last year we have been heartened to watch other councillors challenge this, and INSIST on perusing the documents as a body, speaking to the consultant, meeting developers themselves and asking questions rather than accepting brief retrospective summaries.  We want our Councillors to be above suspicion of unethical behaviour (NON PECUNIARY as well as pecuniary); and not risk possible accusations of Conflict of Interest through putting the public image of, and loyalty to, their companies before their duties as Councillors. ABOVE ALL WE KNOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT GIVES US THE RIGHT TO EXPECT TRANSPARENCY AT EVERY STAGE OF DEVELOPING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.  We hope the councillors concerned will review their positions and that the Council will consider drawing up a Protocol and Transparency Process for all dealings with external bodies, commercial, community or otherwise. Models are available from other councils.  Thank you for listening to our concerns"  **To confirm the minutes of the full council meeting held on Wednesday 5th July**  It was proposed by Cllr Shaw, seconded by Cllr Findlay to confirm the minutes as circulated as a true and accurate record. (9 for, 3 abs)  **To receive the finance report for the month of June including income and expenditure to budget including year to date and balance sheet and to sign the same.**  Cllr Findlay overviewed the reports, commenting that there was a surplus in June of £9,000. The salaries invoice from RCC had not been received and relatively low expenditure on maintenance had been experienced.  Proposed by Cllr Findlay, seconded by Cllr Ainslie. **Resolved unanimously.** The Chair of F & G P, the Mayor and the Clerk signed all documents and reconciliation statements which will be filed with the minutes.  **To receive the finance report for the month of July, including income and expenditure to budget including year to date and balance sheet and to sign the same.**  Cllr Findlay overviewed the reports, comments included nothing was unusual. Year to date a £8,800 surplus was made. Payment’s facility for authorisation of the accounts payable was still progressing.  Proposed by Cllr Findlay, seconded by Cllr Ainslie. **Resolved unanimously.** The Chair of F & G P, the Mayor and the Clerk signed all documents and reconciliation statements which will be filed with the minutes.  **To consider the following grant applications.**  Uppingham Late Night Shopping. Cllrs Simpson & Johnson left the chamber.  The correct form had not been submitted, but the decision was made in principle to award £1,500 upon completion of the correct documents and insurances, health and safety, childcare policies etc were completed fully.  Proposed by Cllr Rees, seconded by Cllr Dalby. **Resolved unanimously.**  Limes Firs and Spurs Residents Association**.** Cllr Ainslie left the chamber.  The Mayor invited opinions on the grant, Cllr Rees stated that he had a problem with residents’ associations saying that in his opinion they were divisive and created a community within a community. He thought they should be self-funding and there was a principle involved. Cllr Jennings added that residents’ associations tended to be in reasonably affluent areas, and he suggested we shouldn’t fund it. Cllrs Dalby and Fish declared an interest and wished a dispensation to speak as residents of Lime Tree Avenue. She referred to part 3 of the application , methodology of the evidence gathering evidence in her opinion as a resident was dubious. Cllr Simpson wished to support the grant and put the alternative view about Residents Associations and, in his opinion, they created community spirt and had been very well received in the new developments. A good example is the Neighbourhood Forum where all different groups, Churches, Residents Associations, communities come together. Cllr Fish declared in his opinion it just needed trimming back and wasn’t a cohesive piece of work. The Mayor pointed out that the laurel hedges were of such a size that professional help was now needed hence the request. Cllr Colbourne as chair of a different Residents’ Association commented that he felt there was a misunderstanding of what associations were there to do, he explained the aims of such organisations. In his view it was a group of people trying to improve the environment and area in which they lived and he would support the application.  Cllr Jennings asked if the laurel hedges/trees in the quadrant grew, who would cut them ?  The Clerk confirmed it would depend on the ownership. Cllr Simpson clarified that Residents’ Associations are required to serve all members of the area, not just those who paid subscriptions to be a member of them. Cllr Dalby stated there was little interest in the Residents’ Association and there was a licence to cultivate from RCC. The Mayor brought the motion back to the table, and the key issue, Cllr Rees made a proposal that half of the amount was awarded as a gesture of goodwill, this did not find a seconder and the motion fell. Cllr Shaw proposed that the full amount should be awarded, seconded Cllr Colbourne (5 for 7 against.) **Not Resolved.**  **Uppingham Bowls Club.** Cllr Hobbs left the chamber.  This was an application for CIL money to put solar panels on the roof. Cllr Rees suggested that we should go ahead as it served the community. Cllr Ainslie proposed a deferment so that it could be discussed at item 18 on this agenda. Seconded Cllr Shaw, **Resolved Unanimously.**  **To consider the appointment of WORKNEST to be the Council’s H & S consultant.**  The Clerk had previously sent out the proposal. The Clerk highlighted that this is possibly the most important aspect of council procedures, by employing Worknest they would be our legal representative, it would protect UTC going forwards. The Clerk pointed out that a previous resolution had been that this council would not employ lots of staff but would buy in technical quality advice when this was needed.  Proposed, seconded and **Resolved unanimously.**  Cllr Shaw proposed that the Council should take the option of the 36-month contract. Seconded Cllr Rees**. Resolved unanimously,**    **To consider entering into a formal contract with BIFFA for the groundworks already maintained and possible additions going forwards.**  The Clerk overviewed the position that we do not have a formal agreement. The Clerk and her assistant had already had a meeting with Biffa where she had outlined her requirements, in addition to the grass cutting and hedge management. The Clerk wanted to add a twice weekly litter pick through the summer of Tod’s Piece.  The Clerk explained that in our submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, we aspired to look after our Green Spaces, was this something that Council wanted to consider ? This would be at the cost of this Town Council.  There were some ownership issues and RCC were currently mowing. Cllr Ainslie pointed that this is to 31st March to get an official contract in place. The Amenities Committee could then look at alternative arrangements for the end of the contract in the meantime.  RCClr Wise confirmed that if we were to take on responsibility for the green spaces, there was a money transfer for this, it was a pre-determined figure. The Clerk to check the dates as Cllr Wise thought any requests needed to be agreed prior to 1st December of the previous year to enable it to kick in.  Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Shaw. **Resolved unanimously.**  **To receive a presentation from Emma Obadas (RCC) transport issues**  As the Mayor had indicated in her opening remarks, we had been notified earlier that the officer was unable to attend, and this would be the subject of a further meeting.  **To receive reports and consider recommendations for full Council from UTC committees and working parties.**  Staffing – 19th July 2023.  Cllr Simpson overviewed and confirmed that as we had a new council maybe we should reconsider the debate again of employee or contractor so all felt involved in the decision.  We were again approaching appraisal time, so the committee agreed to go with the system utilised last year which had worked well for employee and employer. The Chair and Vice Chair would appraise the Clerk after feedback from the whole council and the Clerk would appraise the administration assistant.  Training - would council like to invite LRALC to do private councillor training to take place at Uppingham? Cllr Simpson declared an interest as a director of LRALC. This was agreed as a good idea.  It was proposed by Cllr Simpson, seconded by Cllr Shaw to receive the minutes and to ask the Clerk to set up two training sessions. This was within Council budget. **( 11 for, 1 abs)**  **Overview of meeting between UTC and Uppingham Bowls Club (proposal in private session)**  Cllr Findlay gave an overview that we could loan some money to help facilitate the purchase of the club over a period of years. The proposal received by the Bowls Club would be discussed in confidential session.  Cllr Ainslie proposed that we receive these minutes, seconded by Cllr Rees. **Resolved unanimously.**  **Update on Standing orders working party.**  Cllr Jennings overviewed the work done. These were made gender neutral, and inconsistencies corrected. There had been some disagreements, but these would be put to full council. There would be some further work on how the council was constituted.  Cllr Rees proposed we receive these minutes, seconded by Cllr Dalby. **Resolved unanimously.**  **To consider the Report of the CIL champion for the previously discussed works to the Town Hall to include proposals and estimates.**  The Mayor explained for the new councillors, how the CIL areas and champions were decided following a great deal of work to decide corporately how to spend our CIL monies.  One of the areas was the Town Hall which needed a good deal of work. Cllr Shaw had taken the role of the TH champion.  Members had received all the various works suggested, with quotations prior to the meeting.    Cllr Shaw overviewed the quotes and the work done to this point on the kitchen, cellar, heating, flooring. Cllr Shaw declared that he would be able to use his discount, but any bills would be addressed to the town council.  Cllr Shaw further recommended three phase electrical supply as currently the Town Hall is run on a normal domestic supply of 100 amps . We are likely to push the limit of that usage in the future, and this would protect us going forward.  Total cost is £57,000 with a £10k contingency cost built in.  Cllr Rees asked if we had three quotes for each separate piece, there had been challenges getting quotes.  Council wished to get two more quotes for the kitchen before approving. The Clerk asked that the heating could be processed as her office had no heating and the winter was approaching.  To take these works forward provided we obtain two more kitchen quotes, all other elements can be processed prior to the kitchen.  Proposed by Cllr Rees, Seconded by Cllr Johnson, resolved unanimously.  **To consider adding Cllr Mark Shaw to the staffing committee.**  Due to an error at the annual meeting Cllr Shaw had not been added to the staffing committee as he wished. This agenda item is there to rectify this error.  Cllr Rees questioned why but when it was explained it was an error it was proposed that Cllr Shaw be a member of the staffing committee. Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Johnson (11 for 1 abs)  **To discuss the Vision, Aims document and any feedback received**.  The Clerk reminded members that she had given out this document three meetings ago for members to fill in and return. She explained it was a really important document so that council could set the strategic direction and aims for this new council term. She asked that members give it consideration if they wanted to be a part of the strategic direction of this council and extended the time to Friday 11th August.  Cllr Ainslie proposed that the Clerk amalgamate the responses and that it could then be discussed at a future meeting.  Proposed Cllr Ainslie, seconded Cllr Shaw. **Resolved unanimously.**  **To receive the Clerk’s report and any recommendations within it.**  The Clerk’s report had been tabled; salient points were.   * Debris and Trees cleared at Tod’s Piece Allotments * Fire Alarm Panel had been ordered as the sensor keeps going off disturbing hall hirers. * Dog bins for West Deyne and Tod’s Piece and two new litter bins ordered for Tod’s Piece. This had cost the council £1300 as RCC wouldn’t replace them. * Rewritten Eddie Dorman to progress the London Road empty cemetery spaces, no reply had been received. * Reminded council that by signing up to Civility and Respect pledge this also included training. * Two email addresses were still required ! * Freedom of information request received and would be actioned accordingly. * Chased Solicitors to prepare a legal agreement for the Bloors land. * Chased Solicitors for updated license to occupy police room. * Cynthia has finished the allotments training. * First Inspection visit had taken place at the LR Allotments. Very useful exchange of information and advice we will take forward any issues. * VAT return completed and monies now received into the bank account. * Barclays account – disputed closure of account – we had now received the money back into the Lloyds account.   The Police had requested blue lighting in the TP toilets as a deterrent to drug dealing, the Clerk asked if council were happy if she progressed this. The Clerk will write to the police asking if it complies with the Equalities Act  The Clerk updated council on the quotes obtained and still awaiting. The Clerk will be commissioning a report on the state of the Town Hall roof as one of the major items of work for future proofing. She is aware of the asbestos guttering and also the deterioration being experienced.  **To discuss the invitation and relationship between the Town Council, Uppingham First and Vanguard.**  Cllr Simpson announced that he would withdraw from this item, Cllr Jennings stated with him withdrawing it would be very difficult to ask question, the Mayor replied that she was unable to stop a councillor withdrawing if they felt it proper to do so. Cllr Simpson stated, due to allegations of impropriety of members, the lawyer’s advice had been that he withdraw, and council have their discussion. The partnership had written a positive response to the council.  Cllr Jennings repeated that they had refused an invitation as Cllr Simpson was attempting to leave the chamber. Cllr Fish repeated that he was concerned that UF & UV had refused an invitation to come to the Town Council. He went on to express concern at what was said in the chamber and then misrepresented at the UF board. He confirmed that UTC had received an invitation from UF not Vanguard that UTC were invited to attend a Q & A session from UF and its constituent forums at the UNF.  Two questions…Why haven’t they agreed to the UTC invitation ? he stated that UF and UF are closed to the public whereas the Town Council meetings were open.  Cllr Rees having discussed with colleagues as he wasn’t at the original meeting, had formed the opinion that there was no ambiguity, council had instructed the clerk who had issued a clear invitation. Cllr Rees welcomed the coming together UTC and UF, but no mention had been made of UV. He stated that personally he was very disappointed with the chair and deputy chair of this council who were at the meeting, knew what was requested, read it in the minutes and stayed silent. The Chair reiterated that we invited UF/UV and they said no, we cannot insist on attendance.  Cllrs Findlay and Fish reiterated that we have members of UF and UV as members of this Town Council shouldn’t they remove themselves too. Cllr Fish - is there were any members of Vanguard board here in the meeting? The Mayor asked for quiet in the public gallery. Cllr Fish reiterated concern that the Vanguard board minutes were not up to date. Cllr Dalby commented that the members in the meeting where the invite was suggested one member admitted that they had perhaps not been as transparent as they might have been in the past. It seemed to her that UF and UV had chosen to ignore the invitation that was uniquely as UTC were the qualifying board for the Neighbourhood Plan, instead they had issued an invitation to a wider group of people to talk about their activities in general, this was not an appropriate response to the invitation offered in good faith.  Cllr Jennings stated it was very disappointing and may sound disingenuous, we were trying to get some kind of measure of the perfectly legitimate body in essence, but it does operate as a de facto Town Council. It does and has been doing and admitted by the councillor that had left the room that it could do a better job than the Town Council. People within Uppingham don’t realise that its not the Town council and UF was even more of a worry as it takes it upon itself to reach out to developers, when it should be UTC. Behaviour tonight demonstrates that many people hold UF in contempt and we will do our utmost to ensure that UTC flexes its muscle, and it should! He stated that UTC had let UF walk over it for far too long.  Cllr Findlay stated that there was quite a lot of work to do, nobody could deny that the Neighbourhood Plan was the property of UTC. He believed that UV was invalid due to no permission being given by the Town Council.  The mayor asked for an extension to the meeting as per standing orders to extend the meeting to at least 9.15. proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Dalby . **RESOLVED UNAMINOUSLY**  Cllr Ainslie was invited by the Mayor to make a statement regarding UV as he thought it would be useful to explain how Vanguard came into being and what was the role of the council. The additional paper will be available on the Town Council website along with these minutes.  The Mayor asked what were the aims of the Vanguard board ? – when it was established it was a steering group for the final construct and delivery of the TC and BZ Plan.  Cllr Jennings – why does Vanguard still exist – because it morphed into a “talking shop to bring developers, health, schools, churches together”.  Cllr Rees stated that he saw not that UTC tacitly agreed that Vanguard could meet developers without the UTC knowledge. – A rejoinder was the Clerk had been invited. Cllr Rees stated an incident in the past where a developer thought he had presented to UTC when in fact they had presented to Vanguard. This was given as an example of mis information. He stated that there was no transparency, no openness.  The Mayor asked for another extension to 9.30 but it would be the last one.  Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Findlay. **Resolved Unanimously**  Cllr Findlay asked should we consider taking legal proceedings before another Vanguard takes place.? - Cllr Ainslie referred to his proposal - we can’t stop other groups having a meeting, what are we going to do going forward to put this on a proper footing that is comfortable for all parties.  Cllr Fish – regarding the minutes of UF and comments made in their minutes. – he stated he was not looking for middle ways.  Cllr Colbourne - impasse as a new council – facts and conjecture were mixed in, we have an opportunity to meet, which had been denied , do we want to work to get together. The Mayor again called for quiet in the public gallery. We as a professional body need to demonstrate some professionalism in accepting a complex situation. We don’t have to work together to come together.  Cllr Fish stated that what he had said was not conjecture, and how UF misrepresent what we do as UTC by the Cllr standing outside the room.  Cllr Findlay – stated there was real history and they had been fighting the war for twelve years and he was fed up with it. The Mayor stated we had to find a way forward that might not exactly be our way – Cllr Findlay said we’d tried that.  Cllr Dalby – requested protocol for guidance for meetings with developers rather than secretive meetings with developers or other groups, rather than the perception of some on council and members of the public that this was being done.  Cllr Jennings – agree with Cllr Ainslie and that’s why he put the motion down – there was a lot of disquiet, and the key reason for the motion was to try and work our way through. But very cleverly UF engineered this refusing to come to us we go to them in a very different kind of context where they have control. It wouldn’t wash and he would definitely not be going, I’m sure other councillors won’t be going. He stated it was contemptuous, utterly contemptuous!  Cllr Rees stating point was made UF had invited us to a meeting not UV which was the issue.  Cllr Ainslie suggested we write to Vanguard to ask that UTC have a seat on the board, Cllr Rees gave credit to Cllr Ainslie as UTC had learnt far more about UV tonight than had been previously known.  Cllr Fish - has anyone ever read the minutes of UF meeting? .  Cllr Findlay - write to them stating they had not given a civilised response to the invitation; members feel that it might be resolved by a counteroffer. The Mayor asked that Cllr Findlay withdraw the word civilised which was agreed.  Proposed Cllr Findlay, seconded Rees - 7 for 3 abs. 1 Against   1. A representative on the UV   2 . To reinstate the observer’s role on UF  Cllr Fish still wanted to reissue the invitation, the Mayor asked if these people had written to these organisations as they had been asked to do, he stated no, as there was no trust in these organisations.  The Mayor closed this item.  **To note correspondence**   1. Letters to unsuccessful applicants regarding the Bloors land 2. LRALC round robins 3. LRALC Monthly training bulletins 4. Root and Branch Impact Report 5. Email correspondence regarding the land on Seaton Road 6. Rutland Voluntary sector 7. Civility and Respect Certificate and Newsletter   The Clerk would like everyone to look at item 17e.  Proposed that the correspondence be noted Cllr Ainslie, seconded Cllr Clarke **Resolved unanimously.**  **To consider the following resolution “that, in view of the confidential nature of the following agenda item, the press and public be excluded from the meeting, in accordance with the public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1**  **Cllr Hobbs Left the meeting.**  **CONFIDENTIAL TEXT HAS BEEN REMOVED**  The application for the CIL funds £10K to install Solar panels to the building was discussed and agreed.  Proposed Cllr Clarke, seconded Cllr Findlay. **Resolved unanimously.**  The meeting finished at 9.40 pm.  Signed……………………………………………………………… Chair of Council  Dated……………………………………………………………… |
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